



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE
AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



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Embargoed For Release Until:
12:00 MIDNIGHT ET/PT Wednesday, February 6, 2002

MILLIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE MIX SEX WITH ALCOHOL OR DRUGS -- WITH DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES

New Survey Finds More Than Five Million 15- to 24-Year-Olds Have Unprotected Sex Because of Substance Use

Findings to be discussed at upcoming conference
Dangerous Liaisons: Substance Abuse and Sexual Behavior
Thursday, Feb. 7 at CASA headquarters

NEW YORK – Almost one quarter (23 percent) of sexually active teens and young adults – about 5.6 million 15- to 24-year-olds nationally – report having *unprotected* sex because they were drinking or using drugs at the time. Twenty-nine percent say that because of alcohol and drug use, they did “more sexually than they had planned,” according to a new national survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and released at a conference, *Dangerous Liaisons: Substance Abuse and Sexual Behavior*, sponsored by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA*) at Columbia University. The Foundation and the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) are also co-sponsoring the conference to be held **Thursday, February 7th from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at CASA headquarters, 633 Third Avenue in New York.**

“For teens, drinking and sex is at least as dangerous as drinking and driving,” said Joseph A. Califano Jr., president of CASA and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. “The message of this study is loud and clear: to be effective, sex education -- in all its forms -- must discuss the connection between sexual activity and alcohol and drug abuse, and those who promote abstinence must help teens see that connection.”

Of the 15- to 24-year-olds surveyed:

- 50 percent say “people their age” mix alcohol or drugs and sex “a lot.”
- 73 percent believe that their peers often don’t use condoms when alcohol and drugs are in the picture.
- 37 percent want more information about “how alcohol or drugs might affect decisions about having sex.”

“Many teens, as well as young adults, are mixing sex with alcohol and drugs, and putting themselves at risk,” said Drew E. Altman, Ph.D., president of the Kaiser Family Foundation. “These are sensitive issues that many young people don’t like to talk about, so these data likely underestimate the full extent of the problem.”

Conference participants available for interviews. Mult box available. Please contact Ellen Ross 212-841-5260; eross@casacolumbia.org or Amanda Mitchell 650-854-9400 x223; amandam@kff.org. Conference will be webcast at www.casacolumbia.org and www.kaisernetwork.org/healthcast/casa/07feb2002, Friday, February 8th at 9 a.m. EST. Transcripts available.

* The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University is neither affiliated with, nor sponsored by, the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (also known as "CASA") or any of its member organizations, or any other organization with the name of "CASA."



Quick Facts on Sexual Activity and Substance Use Among Youth

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about half of all 9-12th grade students have had sexual intercourse. The percentage increases by grade with 65 percent of 12th graders having had sexual intercourse, compared with 39 percent of 9th graders.

The CDC also reports that three quarters (79%) of high-school students have experimented with alcohol at least once, and a quarter reported frequent drug use.

For more information about sexual activity and substance use among young people and the link between the two, the Foundation developed the following new background materials available for free online at www.kff.org or through our publications request line at **1-800-656-4533**:

Fact Sheet: "Substance Use and Sexual Health Among Teens and Young Adults in the US" (Pub #3213)

Issue Brief: "Substance Use and Risky Sexual Activity" (Pub #3214)

A **Survey Snapshot** (Pub #3215) and **Toplines** (Pub #3216) of the data reported here are also available on the Foundation's website or through the publications request line.

Methodology

The data are taken from The Kaiser Family Foundation's *National Survey of Youth Knowledge and Attitudes on Sexual Health Issues*, a national random-sample survey of 1200 adolescents and young adults 13 to 24. The findings reported here reflect interviews with 998 15- to 24-year-olds. The questionnaire was designed by staff at the Kaiser Family Foundation and Princeton Survey Research Associates (PSRA) and analysis was conducted by staff at the Foundation. Fieldwork was conducted by telephone by PSRA between November 13, 2001 and January 20, 2002. Interviews were completed both in English and Spanish according to the preference of the respondent. The final response rate was 57 percent.

The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4 percent for the total sample of 15- to 24-year-olds and plus or minus 4 percent for the sub-sample of sexually active 15- to 24-year-olds. Thirty-seven percent of 15- to 17-year-olds reported being sexually active, and 81 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds reported having had intercourse (or are currently married, living as married, or have ever been married).

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The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University is the only national organization that brings together under one roof all the professional disciplines needed to study and combat all types of substance abuse as they affect all aspects of society. CASA's missions are to: inform Americans of the economic and social costs of substance abuse and its impact on their lives; assess what works in prevention, treatment and law enforcement; encourage every individual and institution to take responsibility to combat substance abuse and addiction; provide those on the front lines with tools they need to succeed; and remove the stigma of substance abuse and replace shame and despair with hope.

With a staff of 74 professionals, CASA has demonstration projects in 60 sites in 32 cities and 21 states focused on children, families and schools, and has been testing the effectiveness of drug and alcohol treatment, monitoring 15,000 individuals in more than 200 programs and five drug courts in 26 states.

The Kaiser Family Foundation is an independent, national health philanthropy dedicated to providing information and analysis on health issues to policymakers, the media, and the general public. The Kaiser Family Foundation is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries.